



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

WHAT MORALITY HAVE WE LEFT?

AT no time in the history of the world has there been such a rapid—I might say revolutionary—advance of opinion as within the last few years. As much progress is now made in a year as used to be in an age. Two or three years ago, intelligent men, though they had left Christianity behind, fondly clung to the idea that faith was not gone, and an evolutionist advertised for a new religion (July, 1878). Under the sentiment that then prevailed, the most intellectual university in this country started an endowment for its theological seminary, and made the religion it teaches, not Christianity, but a universal religion, in which a fair place might be given to Buddhism, which, though inane in its creed and abject in its requirements, is at least better than the religion of blood and perdition. This measure met with considerable opposition from our more advanced thinkers, who maintain that the day of all religions, even of Buddhism, has passed away forever. At this stage—that is, in the period of transition, when the old had not given way before the new—appeared the article written by an agnostic (September, 1879). About this time, one who pretends to all knowledge—the president of a college called by the late Professor Diman the Ehrenbretstein of orthodoxy—feeling that religion was tottering, formally avowed that there was truth in development—which, I may remark, will soon sweep away the half-way house which he has built, and to which some have retreated to shelter them from the floods. Since that time thought has taken another cataract leap, and, since the publication of Spencer's "Data of Ethics," our promising youth are everywhere inquiring into the foundations of morality, which had previously been considerably shaken by the doubts insinuated in Sidgwick's "Method of Ethics."

I am myself a graduate, of a few years' standing, of an orthodox college, of the Puritan type by heredity. That college has for the last year or two been considerably exercised about development; some of its teachers and a number of its independent-minded students rejoicing in the new light, while the great body of them are in a state of somnolence, from which they will soon have a terrible awakening. Here I may remark that the majority of the Middle States colleges are in much the same position—asleep on the edge of a volcano soon to burst. A few of the lately established colleges have the courage to make no profession of religion. With others the profession is hypocritical, as they are retaining the form merely to save appearances, which they will part with as soon as it can be done with safety. The scientific schools, I may add, have not studied the question; but, not having been instructed in any creed, they are nearly ready to join the advancing movement, as they know that development, which renders the interposition of God unnecessary, is as certain as gravitation, or any other law of nature.

I was trained by my mother (my father is not a professing Christian, and took no special charge of me) in a Puritan religion and morality somewhat relaxed. Her training in respect of the Sabbath and of amusements was not nearly so strict as that of her father and mother, and that was considerably below the model of their grandparents; still it was stiff enough, and was all founded on the Bible. In college I fell in, at first reluctantly, but afterward heartily, with the current of the times, with evolution and heredity; and was a great admirer of Huxley and Tyndall, and some of our professors who favored these views. I was greatly fascinated with the eloquence of the great Lynbrook preacher who, from time to time, visited our college, and with the freedom of opinion and of action which he allowed us; but, as he had no philosophy and no science, his teaching did not tend to stay or establish me. Since my graduation, being free from all parental control and college restraints, I have set myself to ponder some very vital questions. Religion I know is gone, and all traditional belief regarding a supernatural power, the immortality of the soul, and a day of judgment. I have to consider where I now am. In particular, I have to settle whether there is any foundation left for morality.

First. My mother's morality is evidently gone. It was founded on the Hebrew Scriptures, and consisted in a constant appeal to

God. She taught me to pray in infancy, and made me go to church in my childhood. She bade me not to tell lies, assuring me that if I did so God would punish me. My father concurred, having evidently no other principle to inculcate. But all this grew less, and finally disappeared under my new teaching. Except on rare occasions, and when under impulse hereditary, I gave up prayer, as I had no God to pray to. When allured to evil, I am not sure what principle to fall back upon. If I avoid falsehood, it must be from some other consideration than the fear of hell.

Second. The ethical teaching of my college professor is also gone. My teacher belonged to what is called the "intuitive" school of morals, which has had mighty influence from the days of Bishop Butler. He founded morality upon instinct or intuition; or, as it is called since Kant's time, *a priori* reason—that is, upon a moral power, or conscience, regarded as an ultimate and independent arbiter. But all this mud has been undermined by a deeper digging. Hume and J. S. Mill ingeniously explained our moral convictions by association of ideas. But Herbert Spencer has shown in a profounder manner that these, like all other intuitive or necessary beliefs, are merely the product of the gathered experience of our ancestors, animal and human, through the ascidian, the mollusk, the monkey, on to man, and handed down by heredity. A power gendered of such materials cannot be regarded as infallible or entitled to claim supreme authority. The ancestry of conscience has been inquired into; and it has been shown to be as doubtful as apostolic succession, which has flowed through so corrupt a stream of popes.

Third. I took refuge for a time in utilitarianism, and then in hedonism. It seemed to me so beneficent to promote the welfare of all. In this way I got rid of that sour and ascetic, that stern and cruel morality which was displayed in burning witches by our Pilgrim forefathers. But my professor and his followers pressed me with the question: What sanction have we for the principle that every man ought to promote the greatest happiness of the greatest number? What, in fact, is to lead any one to look after everybody's, or, indeed, anybody's happiness, except his own? The religious man, they showed me, has a motive to induce him to follow this end. God has commanded him, and can encourage and reward those who do good. The intuitive moralist points to such a sanction in our essential nature, commanding him to love and obey God and do good. The two combined form

an amalgam with powerful attractions. But utilitarianism has in itself no such claim, obligation, or duty. At the imperfect stage which development has yet reached, I am afraid that the motive which utilitarianism supplies will not be able to prompt men to great actions or keep them from doing evil. We shall see that Mr. Spencer shows that it will be different when evolution has done its work.

Utilitarianism draws its plausibility very much from the ambiguity of certain phrases, such as "good," "a general welfare." If these are employed simply to denote pleasure or happiness, they are used appropriately enough. But the difficulty in that case is to show that there is any obligation to promote the general happiness or any happiness except our own, or, indeed, to promote our own ultimate happiness in preference to present pleasure or passion. But surreptitiously and illegitimately these phrases carry with them a meaning carried over from intuitive morals, and are understood as moral good which bring with them duty and obligation. But the ambiguous middle has been detected and exposed. The utilitarian theory would insist that men *ought* to promote the greatest happiness of the greatest number, but this *ought* is of the nature of an innate or *a priori* principle which all modern philosophy rejects. Intuitive morals founding on a law does insist that we should seek the happiness of the greatest number. But utilitarianism has no authority to go beyond saying that you may do so if you choose. If they do not choose, men are under no obligation to pursue any one's happiness except their own—not even their own permanent happiness.

Every one is led by instinct to seek pleasure. Hedonism is a native, natural, and genuine theory which has great attractions for me. But man is in fact led by other instincts, coming from brute ancestors, and differing in different individuals, such as appetites, attachments, loves, and hatreds. Each of these craves for gratification. These special appetences, the love of money, of sex, or of praise, have often greater power than the love of happiness to others, or even themselves. Men will often gratify their appetites or tempers, being quite aware that their doing so is contrary not only to the happiness of others, but to their own happiness. Most people will gratify their resentments, even though these should bring them into trouble.

Utilitarianism is thus seen to be powerless, logically and practically, unless it is supported by something foreign to itself. It

was brought forth and set up as a theory when it was seen that the innate or *a priori* was weak and ready to die. It kept back the advancing tide for a time, but has now been undermined and its defenses strewn to the waves.

Professor Sidgwick, of Cambridge, has a mighty name in England, as falling in with the spirit of the transition period. He is the most skilled man in our day in seeing and expounding doubts and difficulties. With great acuteness he has pointed out the illogical nature both of intuitionism and utilitarianism. He is particularly successful in exposing the perplexities and uncertainties of the calculations which ordinary men are able to make of the greatest happiness of the greatest number in order to determine the path of duty for themselves, and the consequent liability to which they are exposed of making the wish the father of the thought. Having pierced each of the twins with his sharp lance, he has not been successful in his attempt to construct a living body of morals by tying the dead bodies together.

Left in this disheartening position, some of us were looking forward for years to Herbert Spencer's promised book on Ethics, the cap-stone of the grand building which it has taken him so long to erect. I expected to find in it an advance on all that has gone before, and a solution of the difficulties that still press on those of us who have given up the theological, the intuitive, and utilitarian ethics, and have left to us only the epicurean or hedonistic, without knowing how to justify it in demanding more than the appetite for the present pleasure. The work as a whole disappointed Mr. Spencer's numerous worshipers in this country. It has certainly not fulfilled the end which I expected from it. It is a book not so much on the data of ethics—that is, of the principles we are entitled to start with in ethics—as an exposition, very masterly I admit, of the grand moral results to be reached thousands of ages hence, when development, biological and sociological, has done its work.

He begins with an inquiry into conduct, which is defined as "acts adjusted to ends." This is his definition, which would apply to a burglar's key and a forger's signature. "Always acts are called good as they are well or ill adjusted." This tends to widen and liberalize ethics considerably. It contains one most important truth—he makes morality a means, and not an end, grim and inflexible, as our old moralists did. He maintains that the end in virtue is happiness; this makes him avowedly a hedon-

ist or utilitarian. I am not sure that his utilitarianism is in any respect different from or superior to that of Hume, Bentham, and Mill, though he thinks it is so. He stands up for rational utilitarianism. All right; but what are his reasons in this rationalism? The theological moralist has such a reason in the revealed law, the intuitionist in the natural law, which laws require us to look to the general happiness. But where does Spencer get his data? He gets them from a long geological development, which the great body of people—men, women, and children—do not understand, and which the select few who do understand them may not value and will not be swayed by. He is perplexed, as all before him have been, with the difficulty of getting altruism out of self-love, when we have no independent moral law requiring altruism. He speaks of political, religious, and social sanctions. The religious sanction he has banished to the region of the unknown and unknowable, whence, happily, not even a ghost will ever come out to trouble us. The political and social sanctions must evidently depend on the general beliefs and sentiments of the community and of the age; and these, having no fixed moral standard like natural law or revealed law, will vary from age to age, and be different in one country from what they are in another.

But he has done one great service—he has drawn the distinction between absolute and relative morality. In this way he has delivered us young men from the inflexible morality which the theologians have been preaching—without practicing. The absolute morality applies only to a distant future; many will rejoice that for the present they are not under it. He tells us that “conduct which has any concomitant of pain or any painful consequence is partially wrong,” and “the co-existence of a perfect man and an imperfect society is impossible.” Unnumbered ages must run their course before there can be such morality. “Ethics has for its subject-matter that form which universal conduct assumes during the last stages of evolution”—adding, “these last stages in the evolution of being when man is forced by increase of numbers to live and move in presence of his fellows.”

In the present state, which is one of struggle, man is under the relative ethics. Here, “it is the least wrong which is relatively right.” He tells us that, “throughout a considerable part of conduct, no guiding, no method of estimation, enables to say whether a proposed course is even relatively—as causing proxi-

mately and remotely, specially and generally—the greatest surplus of good over all.” He says truly, and greatly to our comfort, that, “as now carried on, life hourly sets the claims of present self against the claims of future self, and hourly brings individual interests face to face with the interests of other individuals, taken singly or as associates. In many such cases, the decisions can be nothing more than compromises.” He illustrates this by the case of a farmer whose political principles prompt him to vote in opposition to his landlord. “The man in such a case has to balance the evil that may arise to his family against the evil that may arise to his country. In countless such cases no one can decide by which of the alternative courses the least wrong is likely to be done.” This relative ethics stands in admirable relation to man as he now is. We see at once that it does not require us to make such sacrifices as the early Christians, the Waldensians, the Huguenots, the Puritans, and Covenanters made, without at all counting the cost of their sufferings against the happiness they might have had, had they taken the other alternative and submitted.

As an ethics for a hundred thousand years or ages hence, Spencer’s Ethics is perfect and will be so acknowledged when that time comes. The fine nervous organization which constitutes Mr. Spencer’s mind will then be dissolved and unconscious; but he will be thoroughly appreciated by the finer organizations dwelling on the earth, and placed above our highest philosophers and scientists. He does not announce very clearly the chronological relation between this period of perfect morality and the final conflagration which Spencer and all scientific men say is to close our present world that it may start anew. But all things are tending toward the era of absolute morality, when pain and what men call sin will have disappeared. In the struggle for excellence, all sharp points and roughnesses will be removed and everything become rounded and smoothed, as the pebbles which lie on our beach have been, by the dashing of the ocean currents. The heights having been ground down and the hollows filled, all will be one rich plain,—“every valley shall be filled and every mountain and hill shall be brought low.” “The conduct to which we apply the name good,” says Spencer, “is the relatively more evolved conduct.” The jugglers in ancient Egypt, the gypsies, the hereditary thieves in our great cities, seem a considerably evolved class, and answer his definition; but they will

then be crushed out by something yet more evolved. In the struggle, the fittest will always survive, and the good will go down by heredity and become instinctive. "Swords will be turned into plowshares and spears into pruning-hooks"; for there will be no evil to fight against. All men, and women, and children will be moral, for nobody will have any motive to *sin*—that word which our *savans* carefully avoid, that thing which the popular religious creeds have created by their restrictions. Men will have a much more pleasant millennium than the Christian one, which makes the felicity proceed from a perpetual Sabbath and psalm-singing. Men will then do moral acts as "matters of course," as they eat, and sleep, and wed by the instincts gendered in them. Men will do moral acts without being conscious of it, without willing it, without meaning it. There will be no need of such deeds and sacrifices as were required of our heroes, for all will flow on according to our wishes. There will be no need of commandments which do so stir up rebellion in independent spirits, for all action will be natural and easy. As our great thinker says so profoundly: "The sense of duty or moral obligation is transitory and will diminish as fast as moralization increases."

Herbert Spencer's Ethics will certainly be the final ethics. But the question does press itself upon us, what is to be the ethics for the time now present and passing? What it is to be myriads of years hence is an interesting scientific problem. But man is yet in too undeveloped a state to be attracted by these distant motives, which have as little power over men or women generally as the most distant star or particle of star dust has on the motion of our earth. There needs, then, some man, very inferior it may be to Spencer, to draw out a provisional morality, always of the relative sort. Professor Fiske might be better employed in this supplementary work than in simply bringing out in graceful style the views which his master is quite competent to unfold and defend in his own robust way. For myself, I do feel that this final morality is not fitted to guide me in those critical struggles through which I have already passed, and through which I may yet have to pass. As a matter of fact, the world is not ready to be swayed and guided by the profound biological motives supplied by our having been evolved from the brute. It is quite accordant with the principles of evolution that, if the generation living at any one time does not keep to the

moral standard, the succeeding one will rather become worse, and heredity will transmit the evil to the ages that follow.

Fourth. The morality of conscience is gone. Everybody acknowledges the existence of conscience—no one more freely than Mr. Spencer; but it must be kept in its own place. A mist, an irradiated mist, has crowned it as a halo. It was believed to be the immediate gift of God, his vicegerent and his witness. But in our day they have had the courage to inquire into the authority of this imperious lord. They have made a search among the old geological records, and found its genealogy and its ancestry, and its lineage is not so heavenly as was supposed. "The intuitions of a moral faculty are the slowly organized results of experience received by the race," says Herbert Spencer. In fact, the conscience has been discovered to be merely a nervous structure. "I believe," says our authority, "that the experiences of utility, organized and consolidated through all past generations of the human race, have been producing corresponding nervous modifications, which by continued transmission and accumulation have become in us certain faculties of moral intuition." It thus appears that our conscience consists of nervous modifications become hereditary.

It is preposterous to represent such a functionary as revealing an unalterable and eternal law, or its necessitating us to believe in a perfect law or lawgiver. It is simply absurd to speak, with Butler, of its being entitled to decide anything infallibly and authoritatively. It is at best a mere impulse, like other nervous affections and appetites, which may be inconsistent and war against each other. It is now to be regarded, not as a king reigning with a divine right, but simply a subordinate, and by no means a very consistent or trustworthy officer in a republic. Being the product of circumstances, it has the force of the circumstances. It has the authority, not of God, but of our brute ancestors. The circumstances being to some extent the same, the decisions are so far alike. The circumstances being so far different, the judgments are also different. The conscience of the East does so far differ from that of the West; the conscience of the Jew from that of the Christian. So far from being infallible, it has often been a deceiver.

O Conscience, what crimes have been committed in thy name! Thy laws have often been more cruel than those of Draco, and should be written in blood. Claiming the authority

of God, thou hast so pictured, or rather caricatured, Him, as to make Him offensive to all benevolent minds. Calling thyself Duty, thou hast perverted all morality. Is there a crime which thou hast not at times sanctioned—murder among the Thugs, deceit among the Jesuits? When men have done evil, thou hast lent thy sanction, confirmed them in their wickedness, and aggravated their crimes. In all good conscience, as he claims, Saul breathed out threatenings and slaughter, and haled men and women to prison. The Inquisition, with its instruments of torture, is thy symbol. In obedience to thy command, good men have been burnt at the stake, or shut up in the darkness of the dungeon till they became maddened. What is vastly worse, thou hast in willfulness deprived whole communities of innocent enjoyments, and led multitudes to bow before the most abject superstitions, and to expose themselves to the most terrible lacerations.

Since my graduation, I have passed through serious scenes in this yet imperfectly evolved world, of which struggle for existence and for pleasure is the characteristic. I feel a delicacy in opening my heart to the public; but good may arise from doing so, as people cannot by mere general statements be made to understand the struggle passing through the minds of our thinking youth. Under precisely such a pressure as that which I have been able to bear, through the struggle between the past now gone and the future to come, a fellow-student of mine, high in the estimation of his college, cut his throat.

My father had, unfortunately, fallen into habits of intemperance, and there is a tendency in my nervous system to crave for excitement. When in college I lived in the circle of the most spirited youths of their quadrennial; and at times I had to drink, especially at certain meetings of the Greek Letter Society of which I was an enthusiastic member. My pen cannot describe the force of the resistance I had to offer. I enjoyed more than others our social meetings. I was always the most adventurous and most hilarious of them all. But next morning, what languor and lassitude! After too many excesses, my conscience began to talk to me pretty loudly. But then I had learned that conscience was the product of circumstances, was merely a stage in the progress of things, and had, therefore, no binding authority. I did turn back at times to my mother's religion with a fond eye—as Eve, according to the myth, must have looked back on

the Garden of Eden. But a flaming sword, turning every way, prevented my entrance. Often, in my weakness, did I wish that there were only some one to forgive the past, and enable me to start with my burden removed. I was in a college in which there were occasional "revivals" of religion (so called), and I was all but carried along by the current of prevailing feeling. Some of the leaders were mere pretenders, and I scorned them. But others were genuine youths, and I accepted their offer to pray with me. But I could not join with them, being held back by the underlying unbelief, as the frost in the ground in winter keeps the genial rain from penetrating into the soil. Often did I wish that, like some of my classmates, I had a throne of grace to go to, and there unbosom myself. But, when I tried it, I got no answer from the supposed mercy-seat. My prayers came back upon me like vapors frozen into hail as they ascended. I reasonably concluded that the whole feeling was an illusion, gendered by the inherited superstitions of the past. I am thus left alone, and yet feeling at times as if I could not stand of myself. At such seasons, I feel as if I were entitled to demand that my masters should supply me with a morality suited to these moods of weakness—as I acknowledge them to be.

I feel a yet greater difficulty in opening another struggle, as *savans* call it—temptation, as my mother would have called it, proceeding on the obsolete theological creed. I was thrown in the way of a lady a few years older than myself, who had been unfortunate in her marriage relation, quite as much as Mr. Lewes had been when he fell in with Miss Evans. She had been treated inhumanly by her husband, and yet had no proof of any criminal act on his part such as would secure her a divorce in the old-fashioned State of New Jersey, in which she lived, and which is so far behind the more advanced State in which I sojourn. I listened sympathizingly to her tale; I felt for her deeply; I admired her full-blossomed and flamboyant beauty, and her lively spirit, and soon a softer feeling was kindled, ran through my veins, and penetrated my whole frame. What was I to do? Ask her to unite her destiny to mine? I consulted my authorities. During my struggle the "Data of Ethics" was published. I turned eagerly to it, expecting a solution, only to find that the mighty speculator had not faced the subject. I turned to my models,—to Goethe, my favorite poet; to Mill and Comte, my philosophers, before Spencer superseded them; to Miss Evans,

my analytic novelist, who penetrates human motives as distinctly as I see the springs and wheels of my clock on the mantel-piece. I read Wilhelm Meister, and was, I confess, somewhat disgusted with its filth, while I admired its genius. Sympathizingly, I wept over the sorrows of Werther. Getting no guiding principle from these quarters, under an irresistible impulse I offered myself to her. Though she had encouraged my attentions, and allowed me liberties such as no married woman should have done, she declined my overture, and had the impertinence to give as a reason that I had no religion, to which I had to reply that at least I knew that she had none. This altercation brought on a counter irritation, which so far conquered my love-sickness. The question often occurs to me, in what state I should have been had she accepted my offer.

I am still a young man, with the world before me,—the only world I believe in. My mother died lately. I waited upon her in her dying hours. I listened to her prayers and her counsels, but could not in honesty give her the consolation of falling in with them. My father is about to take a second wife,—a widow with children,—and I see crucial questions arising before me as to family property and domestic relationship in which I must be sorely tried. My profession being the hard one of a lawyer has also its slippery positions. At times I feel as if I needed a power behind to uphold me. But I know that this is only the remains of hereditary prejudice, with which posterity in its more evolved state will not be troubled.

I protest against the thought that I am seeking to injure morality; this would make me either a fool or a madman. I am simply lopping off the rotten branches, that the tree may be healthier. Much, indeed, of what has hitherto been regarded as morality must be abandoned; we have to part with the weak limb if the body is to be kept alive. The old tables of the law supposed to have been given by God at Mount Sinai, and which are as forbidding and as sterile as that granite mountain, have now been as effectually shattered in pieces as when Moses threw them down as he saw the liberty the people craved. The first table cannot be mended, as we cannot be bound to love the Lord with all our heart when we know that the flaw in the argument for the Divine existence has been detected and exposed. It will not do in this age to rewrite the inscriptions on the second table, as all of them are provokingly prohibitory, and some of them are quite

antiquated and require to be changed and made less repulsive. When everything else is improving, when religion is waning and science brightening, it is time that morality were putting on a new face. If a stern religion like Calvinism has given offense, I am sure a rigid morality has driven away a still greater number of promising youths. After all, morality has always been practically connected with faith, and when we have parted with the old religion we shall have to part also with the old morality. A new and relaxed edition of the commandments must be provided and published,—no, not of the *commandments*, for there is no one to command them; but of the *invitations*, which must all (fewer than ten will serve) appear in a gay dress, and with smiles on their faces to attract young men and maidens. I am not competent to draw out this law; our leaders must do it. I can, however, point out a few things which must be attended to in the construction.

First. We cannot insist any longer that in order to be morally right good must proceed from love. Love cannot be commanded. According to the old law, goodness was supposed to consist in law and love; the law has disappeared, as there is no lawgiver, and the love cannot be insisted on. Love has no fundamental place in the morality of our great masters, such as Mill and Spencer. The latter rejects it. He rejects expressly all those theories: “(1) Those theories that look to the character of the agent; (2) to the nature of the motives; (3) the quality of the deeds.” There is a difficulty in showing how the great body of mankind can be induced to do the outward act, to keep from equivocation and evil-speaking, and to live honestly and purely in all circumstances, unless they are swayed by love. A provision must be made to secure this for the present generation in the new code. We shall see that this is provided by Spencer in the latter stages of development, when all men will be moral.

Second. There must be an allowance made for breaches of the law. Our stiff divines and moralists have been acting on a very different principle. The law is said to be eternal and unchangeable, and then they argue legitimately, if you admit their premises, that all men are under a heavy condemnation or curse—a tenet which weighs down so many buoyant spirits and makes them believe that exertion is useless because hopeless. All mankind—even the best—do in fact transgress; and it is surely wiser to permit them to do what we cannot prevent. The father acts in

this way toward his children, if he is not to be viewed by them as a tyrant, and we may act in the same way toward grown-up children. No doubt our opponents will puzzle us with the question: how great is the license to be? For on such a principle every one will feel himself to be at liberty to go aside from the straight line in his own way—one by relaxing the law of speaking the truth; another the law of filial obedience; another the law of temperance; another the law of chastity or of rigid honesty. I admit that there must be rules or understandings on this subject prescribed with statesman-like wisdom. This is one of the desiderata of our time which I am urging our leaders to supply. Meanwhile, one thing is clear: the law can continue to stand only by being accommodated to the times and the actual practice of mankind. "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath." On the same principle, the law must be made for man, and not man for the law.

Third. In our expurgated moral code we must leave out a great many virtues and graces (as they call them), and cease from calling the absence of them a sin. Half of the graces recommended by the Galilean in his "Sermon on the Mount," usually reckoned the New Testament version of the law by his followers, De Kempis, Calvin, and Edwards, should be omitted; such as poverty of spirit, humility, meekness, sorrow for sin, self-sacrifice! I agree with Hume in regarding these as simply showing abjectness of spirit and as being inconsistent with that manliness which has led to the glorious deeds of which our world is proud. It is a maxim in jurisprudence not to prescribe laws which cannot be obeyed, and which therefore only provoke a multiplication of offenses. It is time that a like principle be laid down in morality. Spencer has so far helped this important practical principle by drawing the distinction between absolute and relative morality, the latter suiting itself to circumstances.

Fourth. Certain acts forbidden by divines, by ascetics, and by our Puritan forefathers, must be freely allowed. The ball-room must be thrown open ungrudgingly, even the masquerade ball, which calls forth the actor talent. The theater, so far from being denounced, must be encouraged, as one of our schools of refinement and virtue, and giving us deep insight into human character. We are not to be prevented from receiving enjoyment from the genius of Sara Bernhardt by prudish considerations, which in most cases are pharisaic. In lessening the number of

commandments (the word is irritating) we should certainly leave out the fourth, requiring us to remember (we should rather seek to forget) the Sabbath to keep it holy (that is in attending preaching conventicles); though of course health and convenience will persuade us to adopt practical means for giving leisure to the working classes and to all men, amusements being provided. Happily, the great men who are doing most to widen the boundaries of science are also seeking to remove the restrictions to Sabbath freedom. Huxley and Tyndall, by their lectures, have struck a blow at the Puritan Sabbath from which it will never recover, though it may continue to kick and groan till it breathes its last. By the removal of such restrictions, the number of supposed sins will be much diminished and painful reproaches become few and slight.

Fifth. In regard to the marriage relation, our leaders have not spoken out with their usual clearness. It looks as if they were afraid. Those who follow them will not be. It is evident that they all approve of some modification of the Biblical law, and have hinted that it ought to be changed. What they have not codified they have recommended by their example. Goethe lived a considerable portion of his life with his housekeeper as if she were his wife. Comte, founder of positivism, the immediate predecessor of agnosticism, had a rapt admiration of Clotilde, his wife being still alive. John Mill made love to the druggist's wife while her husband was living. Miss Evans lived with Mr. Lewes while his wife was not dead. I observe with interest that portions of the religious (so called) press are speaking of this lady as having very pious instincts, and dying with Thomas à Kempis near her bed, and a defense of Spinoza not far off. These are the signs and precursors of what is coming, the streaks of light that forecast the dawn. The wide license given to divorce in a number of the American States, and the thousands of women in each of our great cities ready to welcome all who call, clearly indicates that there must be some regulated system of liberty. But the time has not yet just come for speaking out on this subject.

At times I heave a sigh because the old moral truths are dissolving one by one. But I confess I do not feel so much in parting with the cold and musty morality as with the warm religious truths. Professor Goldwin Smith, who, though a bright writer, has never got adjusted into his proper place (dis-

contented with his own Oxford, and America not contented with him), thinks we are living in a moral interregnum. Such interregna are dangerous, as the old kingdom is gone and the new republic has not got its authority recognized. No one feels this more than Herbert Spencer. "Few things," he says, "can happen more disastrous than the decay and death of a regulative system no longer fit before another and fitter regulative system has grown up to replace it." I know how foolish it is to move out of a house that has sheltered us till another has been provided. But our masters have told all men that the old house is unstable, the rotten ship is sinking, and it is only common prudence to escape, in the hope of meeting, in the broad ocean on which we are cast, some vessel to take us in. I confess I see no such vessel near me, though I know that there is a grand land at a distance. In the year 1744, Hume was a candidate for the chair of Moral Philosophy in Edinburgh University, but did not get the appointment, as people at that stage did not see what morals he could teach their young men in consistency with his system of nescience and atheism. He had, in consequence, no opportunity of constructing a positive system of ethics; and no one since his day has taken up the work. The college in which I was educated did not supply this want, and some of us have had to suffer all the evils of the interregnum. Our president opposed the new light coming in upon us. A professor gave us Spencer's political science, but did not take up the morality which ought to underlie and bear up all social laws. I have given my reasons for not being satisfied with Spencer's structure, which has no foundation to rest on till long ages have passed, and leaves a thousand practical questions unanswered. We are arrived at the same stage in morals as we were a few years ago in religion. Just as the evolutionist a few years ago placed in this journal "An Advertisement for a New Religion," so do I now formally insert *An Advertisement for a New Morality*.

A NEW-LIGHT MORALIST.